



Science for Seminaries



Science for Seminaries Newsletter, Spring 2019

Fostering dialogue between religious and scientific communities since 1995

Welcome 2019-2020 Science for Seminary Participants



We are pleased to welcome nine new seminaries as participants in the [Science for Seminaries project](#), organized by [AAAS DoSER](#) in partnership with the Association of Theological Schools ([ATS](#)). In all, AAAS will select 32 seminaries to carry out 18-month projects and prepare future faith leaders to engage their congregants in dialogues on science and technology issues.



As part of the project, the geographically and theologically diverse seminaries will integrate science into at least two core curricula courses and host at least one science-themed campus-wide event. They will also gather in person three times to connect with scientific experts and network with each other and previous cohort participants. The first meeting for the 2019-2020 Cohort occurred April 3-4 in Washington, DC. During the two-day meeting, participants learned about the resources offered by DoSER and met in large and small groups based on scientific interests and ecclesial family. They also visited laboratories at George Washington University and spoke with scientists working those labs.

The nine schools of the 2019-2020 Cohort are: Ambrose Seminary, Catholic Theological Union, George W. Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University, Hood Theological Seminary, Iliff School of Theology, Knox Theological Seminary, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, St. John's Seminary, and Wartburg Seminary.

[Learn More about the 2019-2020 Cohort](#)
[More information about the Science for Seminaries Project](#)

Upcoming Applications

August 13: Call for Letters of Interest open for the 2020-2021 Seminary Cohort

[Application instructions will be posted on www.ScienceforSeminaries.org.](http://www.ScienceforSeminaries.org)

Project Highlights

The cornerstone of the Science for Seminaries project is assisting a diverse group of seminaries as they integrate science into their core curricula. 16 more seminaries will be chosen to participate over the next three years, joining the 10 seminaries that have already completed a pilot program and the 16 seminaries in the midst of their project work. This quarter, we checked in with two project leaders to see what they've done so far as part of the Science for Seminaries Project.

McCormick Theological Seminary



Rev. Dr. Anna Case-Winters, Professor of Theology & Dr. Reggie Williams, Associate Professor of Christian Ethics

Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology



Dr. Paul G. Monson, Assistant Professor of Church History

What are you working on for the project?

Rev. Dr. Case-Winters & Dr. Williams:

"With the Science for Seminary grant funds, we have been able to redesign two required courses with a view to science engagement: *Introduction to Theology* and *Introduction to Ethics*. We have also provided a four-part program of incentivized continuing education in science for faculty. Two major science events have been held in conjunction with the courses and the continuing education for faculty. These have included a keynote presentation and reception open to the wider community. The first keynote, Dr. Grace Wolf-Chase, an astronomer at Adler Planetarium, presented on 'Stars, Planets, and Prospects for Extraterrestrial Life in our Interactive Cosmos.' Dr. Ron Cole-Turner, Professor of Ethics at Pittsburg Seminary, presented on 'Rethinking Resurrection in an Age of Human Enhancement Technologies' at the second keynote.

Dr. Monson:

"To date we have done the following:

1. Integrated discussions of science into at least four core curriculum courses;
2. Hosted a dinner with 19 seminarians and the director of the local university's planetarium, followed by a show at the planetarium on the origins of the universe;
3. Began a faculty book discussion on evolutionary biology;
4. Hosted a 'Gold Vespers' ('gold' is the color of Catholic scientists) and lecture by a local priest who has written blogs and a book on the relationship between faith and science; and,
5. Organized a seven-day 'Science Pilgrimage' to the Vatican Observatory in Tucson, Arizona, during which 19 seminarians met Brother Guy Consolmagno, Director of the Vatican Observatory, visited Kitt Peak National

Our program will extend into the next academic year with Brother Guy Consolmagno, the Vatican Astronomer, presenting on 'Science, Faith and the Common Good.'"

Observatory for a night show with telescopes, toured the innovative Mirror Lab that is currently building the Giant Magellan Telescope, and enjoyed private seminars with world-renowned astrophysicists and astrobiologists at the University of Arizona."

What is the primary benefit of this project?

Dr. Williams & Rev. Dr. Case-Winters:

"McCormick Seminary is committed to preparing men and women for ministry that will be faithful, relevant, and effective in our contemporary context. For religious leaders today, capacity for thoughtful interaction with the sciences is not optional—it is essential. People of faith engage science daily, and there are scientists and science teachers in the pews of our churches. How are these church members integrating what they are learning from science sources with the life of faith? How can their pastors help?

What we find is that the really big questions people of faith are asking are, in fact, deepened and illumined through engagement with science. Faith and science are both inspired by a deep sense wonder. This common root of wonder leads to awe and to inquiry."

Dr. Monson:

"The Science for Seminaries project ensures the formation of future pastors who can appreciate science on its own terms and apply its sense of humility and wonder to their own pursuit of life's great questions. The grant provides critical forums for learning authentic dialogue with the world of science and embracing scientists as allies in a post-truth culture."

Other News from DoSER & AAAS

AAAS DoSER Holiday Lecture

The Tapestry of Health: Genetic Diversity, History, and Cultural Identity

Human diversity and its practical impacts on health and well-being were the focus of DoSER's 2018 Holiday Lecture, "The Tapestry of Health: Genetic Diversity, History, and Cultural Identity," held at AAAS headquarters in Washington, DC. Experts examined these themes through scientific, cultural, ethical, and theological lenses. Charles Rotimi, Director of the Center for Research on Genomics and Global Health at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), focused on diversifying genomic research to improve healthcare and decrease inaccurate assumptions about patients. Lesley Jo Weaver, a medical anthropologist and professor at the University of Oregon, expanded on this idea by describing how structural and systematic inequalities shape the health outcomes of women in northern India. As she said, "racial legacies of colonialism underpin many of the health inequalities that we see today in India and beyond." Gay Byron, professor of New Testament and early Christianity at the Howard University School of Divinity, summarized the discussion by stating, "it is only in telling our stories in the fullness of their particularity that we can begin to appreciate the full tapestry of health."



[Read the full article](#)
[Watch the Holiday Lecture online](#)

DoSER at the AAAS Annual Meeting

It was a pleasure to see so many of you at the 2019 AAAS Annual Meeting in Washington, DC. DoSER hosted two symposia, two workshops, and a reception during the conference. The team also held an engaging discussion in the exhibit hall, sharing best practices for facilitating dialogue between scientific and religious publics.



The first symposium, "The Biology of Resilience: How Science and Faith Communities Can Work Together," discussed how these two groups can work collaboratively towards the common good of building resilience from trauma. It featured presentations and an informative discussion between Scott Russo from Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai; Farha Abbasi from Michigan State University; Melissa Kelley from Boston College School of Theology and Ministry; and Kimberly Konkell from Building Resilient Communities through Trauma Informed Congregations Community of Practice (TiCong).

[Read more about the symposium](#)

"Science Engagement with Faith Communities," the second DoSER symposium, highlighted opportunities, challenges, and best practices for science communication with the general public, and specifically with religious communities and students. Presenters demonstrated how engagement that is cognizant of community interests, culture, and faith can have a positive and sustaining impact. Speakers and discussants included Rick Potts, Smithsonian Institution; Jame Schaefer, Marquette University; Fatimah Jackson, Howard University; and Salman Hameed, Hampshire College.

[Videos of both symposia will be posted here.](#)

Science for Seminaries is highlighted in the May 2019 Edition of *Science and Theological Education*

In November 2018, six panelists explored the intersection of science and theology in the seminary classroom during a session at the American Academy of Religion (AAR)/Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) Annual Meeting. The newest edition of *Spotlight on Theological Education* highlights this panel and the Science for Seminaries project with essays that "consider the practical necessity to prepare students to engage questions of science."



Contributors include Scott Alexander, Catholic Theological Union; Curtis Baxter, AAAS DoSER; M. T. Dávila, Andover Newton Theological School; Deborah Gin, Association of Theological Schools; Paul Louis Metzger, Multnomah University; and Frederick Ware, Howard University School of Divinity.

[Click here to read the essays](#)

Science Engagement Opportunity with Thriving Earth Exchange

Do you have a community project or goal that would benefit from connecting with a local scientist? Are you a scientist that wants to connect with a local religious community to find sustainable solutions to a local problem?

[Thriving Earth Exchange](#), a program of the [American Geophysical Union \(AGU\)](#), helps scientists, community leaders and sponsors work together to solve local challenges related to natural resources, climate change, and natural hazards. These community-directed projects are guided by local values, goals, and context where volunteer scientists and community members work together to generate sustainable progress.

If you are interested in starting a project or getting involved, [click here](#) or email ThrivingEarthExchange@agu.org.

Invest in Dialogue

Did you know that DoSER is funded by the generosity of donors and grants? Supporting DoSER's vital work of facilitating conversations between scientists and religious communities is as easy as clicking the link below. Your investment will help us fortify our current engagement projects and expand our work into exciting new areas. Email us at doser@aaas.org to learn more.

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